

REVIEWS

Two Popular Hand Books *

These two popular works, both having the same object in view, both addressed to the large class of people who, without special training, wish to acquaint themselves with their local plants, have attacked the problem from very different aspects.

The book written by the Minnesota botanists is "the third of a series intended to render more familiar and usable the plants of the important or interesting groups found in the state." "The text deals with 100 genera, represented by 274 species and about 25 varieties." Each order, family, tribe, genus, and species is outlined in excellently drawn descriptions, which contain a minimum of technical terms and, generally speaking, a maximum amount of clearness. Some purely technical characters are perforce used in a work so comprehensive, and it is a question how amateur users of the book are to interpret these; still more is it almost impossible to avoid their use. To partly overcome this difficulty the authors have prepared, in the introduction of twenty pages, an instructive guide to the rest of the book, explaining in detail, and by the aid of several illustrations, the chief characters by which plants are distinguished and how to "work" the keys.

All the more important shrubs and trees, both native and cultivated, are included and the authors have also seen fit to let in *Epigaea*, *Gaultheria*, *Chimaphila* and *Chiogenes* as examples of "woody plants of the state." There are excellent keys to the genera and species, including some cultivated plants, explained in nearly every case by a very complete set of figures, illustrating the diagnostic characters used in the keys. "The sequence of families followed in the text is that of the 'Besseyan System,' the monocotyledons being placed after the other phyla." This is one of the first modern works to adopt the system in a popular hand-

* Clements, F. E., Rosendahl, C. O., and Butters, F. K., *Minnesota Trees and Shrubs*, pp. i-xxi + 11-314. [Illust.] University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1912. Price, \$1.00.

Darling, C. A., *Handbook of the Wild and Cultivated Flowering Plants*, pp. 1-264. Published by C. A. Darling, Columbia University, N. Y. City, 1912. Price, \$1.25 postpaid.

book. As to nomenclature, it has "been largely determined by each writer for his own portion, though it is hoped that the results are fairly consistent." Some have followed the new Gray Manual, others, Dr. Britton's Manual, and his tree book, and still other parts of the book seem to conform to neither of these systems. It would have added uniformity to the undertaking for the head of the enterprise to have codified this perplexing matter by adopting one or the other of the chief systems now in use in this country.

However, the book is an excellent attempt to bring before the botanical public of Minnesota in concise and understandable form the chief features of the woody flora of the state. Nothing is omitted that would aid one in using the book and the aim of making it self-explanatory has been thoroughly successful.

Dr. Darling, on the other hand, plunges at once into his problem without table of contents and only two pages of "Suggestions to the Student." His "Handbook of the Wild and Cultivated Flowering Plants" comprises "Key to the Wild Plants and Cultivated Trees and Shrubs which Flower during March, April and May" (pp. 3-26), "Key to the Wild Plants and Cultivated Trees and Shrubs which Flower from June to November" (pp. 27-64), "Key to the Wild and Cultivated Trees and Shrubs in Autumn" (pp. 65-80), "Key to the Cultivated Herbs and Potted Shrubs" (pp. 81-106). Throughout these earlier keys there are page references to the general key to the species, systematically arranged, which takes up most of the latter half of the volume (pp. 107-240). Some of these keys have already appeared in *TORREYA*.*

The difficulty of making keys that distinguish, that are an actual help to the beginner, to whom the book is obviously addressed, seems to have been met in a fairly satisfactory way. There may be much question, in spite of their clearness, whether the average amateur can master a key taking up 25 or more pages, for this is a task that many trained systematists find most difficult. There is, too, the ever-present danger that in using more or less obvious characters, the key may throw one's de-

* *TORREYA* 12: 46-65, 12: 155-165. 1912.

terminations completely out of gear, so to speak. The lack of any sort of descriptive matter makes it difficult for the amateur to know whether he has "come out right" or not.

For use in a college class or among those who have had considerable training, the work will be a useful field book and it was written partly with this aim in view. There is no book of exactly this character, no one work that attempts to cover the different seasonal aspects of our local wild and cultivated flora. The author states that a subsequent work may be forthcoming which will give descriptions of the plants keyed out in the present volume. Such a companion volume would be a very welcome addition to the present one and together they would be more usable than the keys can possibly be by themselves. A system of cross referencing from the present to the projected book would immensely increase the usefulness of both.

There is a very complete glossary of terms used in the keys which will be found most useful by students. Unlike most glossaries, the definitions are usually self-explanatory even to the uninitiated. With the aid of this and the instructions at the beginning of the book, a patient and careful student can find all of our common plants arranged according to the season at which they flower. In view of the restricted character of this excellent little book its name would have carried greater significance had it been "Keys to the Wild and Cultivated Flowering Plants."

N. T.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

OCTOBER 30, 1912

The meeting of October 30, 1912, was held in the laboratory of the New York Botanical Garden at 3:30 P.M. Vice-President Barnhart presided. Twenty-five persons were present.

After the approval of the minutes of October 8, the following persons were elected to membership: Dr. A. M. Johnson, 1206 S. Butte Street, Spokane, Washington; Dr. E. W. Olive, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn, New York; Dr. J. A. Harris, Cold Spring Harbor, New York; Mr. O. Kunkel, Columbia University, New York City; and Dr. H. O. Severance, Columbia, Missouri.